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To: The Surface Transportation Board
From: Jim and Tina Sobb
683 Bent Ridge Lane
Barrington, IL 60010
847 38-8281

Re: Canadian National aquisition of E J & E rail line

To whom it may concern:

Jim and I echo the concerns listed on the website sponsored by Communities Against RailConjestion Coalition. Included in our packet you may read our concerns; they are in brief summary:

- Public saftey is at risk.
- Traffic flow conjestion.
- Noise level will increase as well as noxious fumes. Our home backs to the rail line.
- Derailments
- Environmental impact. Our home backs to Cuba Marsh.

Please read the section in the packet that accompanied this letter, about what our region is demanding.

Thank you,

Jim and Tina Sobb

Attachment

Situation Summary

- Canadian National Railroad (CN) – the **only** international rail carrier that covers the entire U.S. – is planning to purchase a marginally used freight rail line that runs through the downtown area of the Village of Barrington.
- CN plans to use this line as its **major Chicago by-pass route for all freight traffic** it plans to move through the Chicagoland area.
- On the route that impacts our region, CN has admitted that it will increase freight traffic from the current 3 to 5 to **20 trains daily**.
- **CN has admitted to us that no other community along the line will be impacted as much as our region by this planned increase in rail congestion.**
- CN needs approval from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) to finalize this acquisition.

Threats to our Region

Threat 1 – Public Safety is at Risk

- Our school district covers an area of 90 square miles, so our school buses cross *this rail line nearly 400 times daily*. This doesn't include all the private vehicles that are dropping off and picking up children or the children walking to and from schools. The safety of our children is at risk with the looming threat of heavy freight trains barreling down the tracks 20 times a day.
- Good Shepherd Hospital has the region's most advanced cardiac care center and a new state-of-the-art emergency department, so blocked rail crossings can become a *life-and-death situation for patients* who can't afford the minutes needed for a rail crossing to clear.
- Because the E&J line bifurcates our region, emergency vehicle response times would inevitably be impacted. A fire doubles in size every minute. A *five-minute delay in fire response time to a burning building could mean the difference between rescue and fatalities*, as well as minimal property damage vs. total destruction.

Threats to our Region

Threat 2 -- Traffic Flow Congestion

- Each freight train will be between 5,000 and 10,000 feet long (the length of over 33 football fields). A train of 6,000 feet could *block all 4 downtown Barrington street crossings at once.*
- One freight train can take an average of *4 minutes to pass a crossing* – that is akin to having to sit and wait for *7 traffic light changes* before your car can proceed. This doesn't include the amount of time for traffic congestion to clear, so we envision that *major traffic backups for miles will become the norm.*
- Since the Village of Barrington serves as the connectivity hub for the region, this huge increase in freight traffic is the recipe for a gridlock scenario of nightmarish proportions – *it threatens to bring the livability and commercial viability of our region to a screeching halt.*

Threats to our Region

Threat 3 – Noise & Noxious Fumes

- *314 of 3,903 housing units (8%) in the Village of Barrington are within 300 feet of the EJ&E line. Train whistles, vibrations, and track noise will go from minimal to a near-constant sensory assault.*
- The region has long protected its green space and wetlands and has invested heavily in preserving their integrity. *The EJ&E line runs through environmentally sensitive areas, including the new \$14 million Citizens Park that contains a unique feature to enable the disabled to enjoy a tree house.*

Threats to our Region

Threat 4 – Worst Case Scenarios

- An avalanche of additional freight trains can only increase risk in our communities when people take risky actions to avoid freight train-induced delays.
- With 72 derailments in 2004 alone, CN's record for rail safety is deplorable:
 - July 10, 2005 – Two CN freight trains collided in Mississippi derailling 23 cars and releasing 15,000 gallons of diesel fuel that burned for 15 hours. Results – 4 fatalities; 100 residents evacuated; property damages exceeding \$9.5 million; environmental clean-up costs totaling \$616,800. Cause – CN crew fatigue.
 - February 9, 2003 – Train derailment in Tamaroa, Illinois with derailed cars releasing methanol. Results – evacuation of an entire village of 850 residents living within a 3-mile radius; fire. Cause – improper rail construction by CN.

Threats to our Region

Threat 4 – Worst Case Scenarios (cont.)

- A Transport Canada audit report made public earlier this year reveals some shocking information about CN's safety record:
 - 54% of locomotives had safety defects.
 - 37% of locomotives had Labor Code violations.
 - 50% of train brake tests had safety problems.
 - 26% of CN Rail Crossings had inadequate sightlines.
 - Audit inspectors also found that most employees reported "there is more emphasis on productivity than on safety."

Regulatory Process: STB Mandate & Proceedings

- Unless the STB believes this acquisition would be anticompetitive, ***they must approve it*** to facilitate interstate commerce.
- The ***STB has the option of dictating mitigation requirements*** for the benefit of impacted communities in approving such transactions.
- The ***STB has encouraged CN to work with impacted communities*** to resolve any problems throughout this STB process to achieve a “***negotiated settlement.***”
- The ***Coalition is a party to the STB proceedings and will defend our interests through that process***, including taking an active role in the environmental impact study that will be conducted in the months ahead by the STB.
- Additionally, the Coalition will work with CN to ***identify the scope of the negative impacts faced by our region and identify solutions that resolve those problems to our satisfaction.***

Primary Environmental Impact Statement Stages

- **Scoping** – determines the scope of issues to be addressed and identifies the range of actions, alternatives, and environmental impacts. As part of the scoping process the STB:
 - Issues a *Draft Scope of Study* for public and agency comment and seeks comment on the *proposed action*.
 - Consults with agencies that have regulatory jurisdiction or special expertise.
 - Conducts field work.
 - Holds *public meetings*.
 - Issues a *Final Scope of Study*.

Primary Environmental Impact Statement Stages

- **Draft EIS** – After scoping, the STB prepares a Draft EIS which contains:
 - A brief description of the purpose and need for action.
 - A description of alternatives, including the proposed action and a comparison of the environmental consequences of the alternatives.
 - The affected environment and environmental consequences.
 - Potential mitigation.
- **Public Comments on Draft EIS** – The STB distributes the Draft EIS and seeks public and agency comments through letters and typically through public meetings.

Primary Environmental Impact Statement Stages

- **Final EIS** – the Final EIS responds to substantive comments on the Draft EIS by:
 - modifying alternatives,
 - developing and evaluating alternatives not previously given serious consideration by the agency,
 - supplementing, improving, or modifying its analyses, or
 - explaining why the comments do not warrant further response.
- **STB Decision** – the Board will issue a final decision that will incorporate some or all of the mitigation measures recommended by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA).

What Our Region is Demanding

- While we understand the need to facilitate interstate commerce, CN cannot benefit its stockholders at the cost of the safety, well-being, and quality of life of the people who live in our communities. *People must take precedence over freight.*
- *We expect CN to be a good corporate neighbor and remedy the problems their business activities create in our region.*
- *Any acceptable mitigation proposed by CN must be accompanied by a realistic plan to achieve full funding so that our region is NOT left footing the bill for infrastructure improvements that are forced upon us by its actions.*